(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) the Government's reaction thereto; and

(d) by when a decision is likely to be taken in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (d) The proposals have been received from Service Headquarters to declare Bhuj District as Field Areas so that some of the concessions which are admissible in Field Areas could be made available to the personnel who suffered loss of life and property due to earthquake. The matter has been considered by the Government. Under the existing order Field Area is an areas where troops are deployed near the border for operational requirements and where imminence of hostilities and associated risks to life exist. The status of areas cannot be changed by occurance of a natural calamity with the objective of giving some benefits to the personnel affected by the tragedy. Theproposal therefore was not agreed to. However, taking into consideration the exceptional circumstances and the dedicated work done by the Defence Services personnel posted at Bhuj, it has been decided to grant suitable honorarium to such personnel.

Fitting of faulty guns in armoured vehicles by ordnance factory, Medak, A.P.

1690. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Ordnance Factory at Medak in Andhra Pradesh had fitted the infantry armoured vehicles sent for possible use in Kargil conflict, with faulty guns;

(b) whether on any other occasion the Pune based Central Armoured Fighting Vehicles Depot also rejected the vehicles for the same reason;

(c) if so, whether any inquiry has been made by Government into the matter and the implications in the operational use of such armoured vehicles; and

(d) what action has been taken by Government in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) No, Sir.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) Does not arise